

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE LISTENING SESSIONS
TALKING POINTS
July 2, 2008
Tulare California

Hello.

**I'm Sandy Beals, Executive Director for FoodLink for Tulare County.
FoodLink is the Food Bank serving Tulare County**

Our vision for the year 2030 is that:

--no child wonders if there will be dinner tonight

--no child falls asleep at his school desk because he hasn't had breakfast

--no child will dread weekends because there won't be any lunch

--no child is overweight because the only food available is cheap, high-calorie, and low nutrient

--no child will consider fresh fruit an occasional luxury

--no child will drink soda instead of milk because it is less expensive and more accessible

--no child sees a worried look on her mother's face when they go to the grocery store

--no child will go through summer without a healthy lunch because school is out

--no child goes hungry

--We hope for a year 2030 in which everyone will be able to access adequate and nutritious food, including all of the fruits and vegetables necessary for good health. Of course, this produce will be California grown without polluting our air or groundwater and be picked by a well-compensated labor force.

This seems to be a very simple vision, but the challenges to making it a reality are great.

--At the Food Bank, we are seeing more and more families who haven't had to rely on us before.

--At the same time, Food banks have entered a crisis stage with a sharp loss in the supply of donated food and our own increased costs of food and trucking.

--Commodity foods supplied to us by USDA have hit a low point with a 60% decline since 2002.

--The new Farm Bill will be helpful with it's increased allocation of commodities; but it is not enough to reach even the 2002 level. And it is definitely not enough to adequately meet the increasing numbers of people in need.

--In 2007, our San Joaquin Valley experienced a freeze that destroyed our citrus and other crops. This instantly resulted in widespread unemployment for many thousands of workers. In response, the Governor's office quickly appropriated emergency funds to make sure these workers did not go hungry. The economic situation that California faces today is a different type of disaster, but this disaster also requires a quick response.

“MUST HAVE’S”

--We are very involved with the California Association of Food Banks Farm 2 Family program. We purchased over 2 million pounds of fresh produce over the past 2 years. It is imperative that this program flourish and grow.

--Our local ag industry must also flourish. The Freeze of 2007 was a startling reminder of what happens to our entire economy when ag suffers.

--Government-funded programs such as food stamps, school breakfast and lunch, WIC, senior meals, and Summer Food must be supported and maintained. These programs help families stay strong and healthy through economic downturns.

--The state should institute a state-funded food purchase program to help Food Banks provide enough healthy food to families in need.

Thank you for your time and interest.